

Analyze the culture shock essay

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Abstract The factors of culture shock are various. Different values, beliefs and customs can create information overload. Besides, language barrier reduces the understanding of the new culture and makes people feel isolated. In addition, the difference in food is one of the main factors of culture shock. Original eating habit is not easy to change, so it becomes more difficult to fit in. Moreover, people from different social structures cause culture shock. Furthermore, the individual differences such as age, sex, socio-economic class and education also influence degree of culture shock.

Culture shock typically occurs in a four-stage process that can unfold over varying lengths of time: the honeymoon, negotiation, adjustment, and mastery phases. In the honeymoon phase, people always feel excited and fascinated about the culture. After that is negotiation phase which is the real culture shock. In this stage, people are struggle in the differences between cultures. When people start to recover, they jump to the next stage, adjustment phase. In the last stage, people will start to embrace the new culture.

Different people experience culture shock in different ways and to different degrees, but they all go through the same process of this model. People in this situation will have both positive and negative effects which influence people psychologically and physically. It causes depression, anxiety and hopelessness and, in turn, it will reduce problem solving skill, inefficiency of work and negative interpersonal relationships. Besides, it also causes physical symptoms like colds and headaches. However, it also brings positive effects such as self-confidence, self-motivation, culture sensitivity and language skills.

Culture shock is a temporary phase. There are various ways to reduce these emotions. Keep in touch with family and friends by making phone calls, using web chat or sharing photos and experience on social networks. Get involved in local activities and make new friends can reduce the negative emotions. Explore is another good way to maintain the excitement stage longer. Be open mindedness and have positive attitude is the key to overcome this. Keywords: culture shock; Oberg; phases of Culture Shock; causes, effects and solutions

1. Introduction – Culture Shock

In the last decade, an increasing number of people have opted to study, work or live in a foreign country which is totally different in culture and environment. When people visit an unfamiliar culture for the first time, it results in culture shock. The term Culture Shock was coined by a world renowned anthropologist Kalervo Oberg in a 1954 speech in Rio de Janeiro. He introduced his model for Culture Shock, four phases when people encounter a new culture. The first time when people visit or move to another country, they are often astonished by the differences between other cultures and their own.

These differences sometimes make people feel uncomfortable, frustrated, fearful or insecure. In Oberg's speech, he defined Culture Shock as follows: " Culture Shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life. " Culture shock is a psychological stress which happens in the beginning when visiting another country which causes not only negative but also positive effects.

This paper aims to investigate the causes, the effects and the solutions as a practical guide to those who are about to start this adventure.

2. Causes of Culture Shock

There are several factors that cause culture shock.

2. 1 Information overload

People who face a different culture or environment for the first time will inadequately use their own culture as a standard to interpret, judge and behave in the new culture. This is “ information overload”. There are various things that will hit people immediately when they arrive in a new country, like traffic signs, sounds, table manners and other customs in daily life.

In addition, people from different countries have a different cultural value which is built on deeply-embedded sets of values, norms and beliefs. This cannot easily be changed in a short time. People try to interpret new language meanings, new nonverbal, behavioral, contextual and socialcommunicationwhich is unfamiliar with their immanent knowledge and originate systems. This generates emotional and mental burnout.

2. 2 Language

Language can create even greater barriers between cultures. Knowledge about the culture and language are essential to understand the host culture.

Thus, the misunderstood cross cultural communication becomes one factor. People who come to a new country at an adult age can have particular difficulties overcoming the language barrier. People will fail to communicate, misunderstand each other, and have different intonation and pronunciation. It makes people feel frustrated when communicating. For example, when people order food in restaurants, use bank services or have classes at school, they will face various obstacles in communicating. Besides, it is

impossible to become proficiency very fast especially for students who study abroad.

Although people try very hard to improve their language, they still have some difficulties which cannot be solved in a short time. Thus, the language barriers can influence the isolation which causes a lot of stress and strain. 2.

3 Food It is fact that food is different from country to country. It tastes different, or is cooked differently. The eating habit is a difficult factor to change. Thus, it is one of the important factors which cause culture shock. Although food is imported and exported very frequently, it is harder and more expensive to buy the food you like.

For instance, people cannot find ingredients which they are used to eat or cannot find restaurants which are similar to their home country. People need a lot of time to recreate recipes by using the local food and spices to suit their original eating habits. Therefore, people will face lots of difficulties in getting used to this. This doesn't take only a few months, but sometimes years. 2. 4 Social structure Another important example is the extent of individualism or collectivism exhibited.

Collectivism is mostly seen in the cultures of Asia, Africa, parts of Europe and Latin America which have stronger values promoted in groups and interdependently, whereas individualism is mostly seen in the cultures of Western Europe and North America which endorse independence and individual goals. Ergo, people from collectivist societies who move to individualist societies and vice versa feel like a fish out of water. 2. 5 Individual differences The factors vary according to personality and the ability

to cope with new environments. It includes age, sex, socio-economic class, and education.

Knowledge about a culture and previous experience abroad are commonly considered in relation to cross-cultural adaptation. Some personality factors are generally believed to influence this process. For example, children do not have much culture shock. But when people grow to a certain age, the degree of culture shock starts to increase. Males are more malleable than females, thus they can adapt to a new culture faster. 3. The phases of Culture Shock Kalervo Oberg (1954) classified culture shock into four stages—Honeymoon, Negotiation, Adjustment and Mastery which is known as U-Curve model.

Different people experience culture shock in different ways and to different degrees but they all follow Oberg's four stages model. 3. 1 The honeymoon phase In this period, everything about the foreign culture is so new and intriguing. People feel enthusiastic, excited and fascinated about the new culture, particularly about food, drink, pace of life and locals' habits. Figure 1 displays that they experience a level of 5. 5 in adjusting to the new culture. It is always combined with openness, curiosity, and a readiness to accept the situation.

It is similar as honeymoon period that everything about it seems perfect. However, this stage lasts only for the first few weeks. Figure 1The degree of adjustment to culture shock in honeymoon phase is just over 5. 5. After this short period, the figure plunges to around 2. 5, the lowest point which is the negotiation phase and this is the real culture shock stage. When people overcome it, they will be in the adjustment phase. The figure from this stage

proliferate over 4. 0, followed by the mastery phase which increases to 6. 0 and over. | 3. 2 The negotiation phase

After the excitement drifts away, the actual culture shock emerges. The differences between new and old cultures stand out which cause unpleasant feelings of anxiety and frustration. The degree of adjustment plummets to around 2. 5 (figure1). Generally, it is caused by language barriers, culture values, public hygiene, traffic safety or food accessibility. These differences will provoke uncertainty about oneself and the surroundings because of the lack of belonging and the unfamiliarity and disconnection with the old culture. This results in feeling lonely and homesick. Communication is the main factor.

Language barrier become the catalyst of these negative emotions. It often lasts at least three months, depending on individuals. 3. 3 The adjustment phase During this stage, things become normal. This is also known as a recovery stage. People start to understand and get accustomed to and feel more comfortable with the new culture, and then they will develop their own routines. People will try overcoming their problems. The negative reactions are reduced. Thus, the language barrier and the relationship to the host nation start to improve. People are able to be more flexible and can work effectively.

Figure 1 shows that the degree of adjustment is cover to that of the Honeymoon phase and even exceeds it. 3. 4 The mastery phase In the final stage, people fully and comfortably participate in the host culture and embrace the new environment, but still maintain their home culture. It is often regarded as the biculturalism stage. The level of acceptance often

reaches 6. 5 according to Figure 1. Not every person in every situation goes through the same process of Oberg's model. These stages often blend and overlap. It differs for individuals, and varies in length. 4. Effects of Culture Shock 4. 1 Negative effects . 1. 1 Psychological effects Change may cause stress. The symptoms of culture shock are essentially psychological. The major symptoms may be described as depression, anxiety and feelings of helplessness. If depression, anxiety and feelings of helplessness accumulate, the degree and extent of psychological disorientation may be deeper and deeper so that people may have difficulties in paying attention to the learning of new cultures. Moreover, psychological disorientation may influence people's abilities to solve problems and to make decisions. This decreases the motivation for adapting to the new conditions.

Most important is that when people fail to defeat the symptoms of culture shock, they are likely to become hostile to the host nationals, which may lead to negative interpersonal relationships. Therefore, dealing with psychological stress caused by culture shock such as depression, anxiety and feelings of helplessness is significant for those people who come into contact with a new culture. 4. 1. 2 Physical effects However, there are also physical symptoms that may manifest themselves in the form of an increased incidence of minor illnesses (e. g. colds and headaches) or more serious psychosomatic illnesses brought on by depression. . 2 Positive effects On the contrary, not all the effects are negative. With time and patience, people can experience positive effects of culture shock, such as increased self-confidence, improved self-motivation and cultural sensitivity. Besides, people can improve their language fast. Moreover, we can learn to adapt to

different people from different countries, different religious or different social values, and also learn to respect their customs and beliefs. Furthermore, it can challenge us in solving problems in daily life and finding positive effects in the difficulties.

It makes people more self-confident and provokes self-motivation in the future.

5. Solutions Culture shock is normally a temporary phase. There are various ways to reduce the effects of culture shock. Everyone has to find their own balance between the values of their home country and those of the host country.

5. 1 Keep in touch Staying in touch with your family and friends at home will help you reduce and help overcome the effects of culture shock. The Internet makes it very easy to maintain regular contact, for example by using web chat or voice calls, or by sharing news, information and photos of your life on social networks.

It is wise to set a regular time to call people back home or share photos and experiences on Facebook.

5. 2 Explore Exploring is one of the nice ways to overcome the negative emotions from culture shock. Everyone should get a copy of a travel guidebook like Lonely Planet, read it, actually study it and become familiar with it. This will help to understand the people and their history.

5. 3 Involvement Joining local activities like festivals, sport clubs or learning to cook local dishes, are ways to be proactive in making new friends. Making friends with other nonnative people can help you understand your emotions.

Most importantly, making friends with local people is essential as you can learn more about their culture faster.

5. 4 Open mindedness The key to reduce negative effects of culture shock is in a positive attitude. Open

mindfulness is an important factor to understand and accept the new culture and environment. People who restrict themselves in their culture and habits find it impossible to overcome the unpleasant feeling of the new culture. Therefore, having a positive attitude and being open minded are indispensable in reducing the negative effects of culture shock. 6. Conclusion

From one culture to another, the differences among them cause feelings of unfamiliarity. This results in a large amount of psychological stress such as depression, anxiety and feelings of helplessness. However, there are various solutions for different people to deal with these symptoms. Before entering a new cultural environment, it is very important for all people to make full preparation. Understanding the process of culture shock and features of a new culture may be useful for all. Most people will experience culture shock in one form or another. It is not a sign that they have made a mistake, or that they are not coping.

Learning to embrace the uncertainty and initial discomfort and finding all of the positive things around them are essential. The symptoms will pass before too long and they will probably find that it has been a useful learning experience, whether they intend to return to their home country or not. Bibliography [1] Ashim C. Uwaje, " Culture shock, Re-Integration and Re-Entry culture shock - Managing Cultural Differences" 2009 [2] Furnham, A. and S. Bochner, " Culture Shock: Psychological Reactions to Unfamiliar Environments" London and New York: Methuen & Co Limited, 1986 [3] Grant G.

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